

# Christian Community

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## HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR CHURCH FOR SOCIAL ACTION

By HERMAN F. REISSIG

You are the minister or a lay member of the church. You think the time has come to do something about social action in your church. Your question is not, "Should we do it?" but "What is the best way to go about it?"

The following steps are suggested with full awareness that you will want to adapt them to fit the situation in your church. But this is, at least, the way it could be done.

1. Read carefully "Ways of Christian Social Action" in the February, 1954 issue of *Social Action*, including the "Editor's Commentary." Make notes as you go along. Consider the definition of social action on page 19. What do you think of the editor's addition to this definition? (p. 40) Do you agree or disagree with the article's description of the goal of social action? (p. 9-12) The editor has a question about this. (Bottom p. 44).

**Caution:** Don't decide, as you read, just what your church is going to do. Get the ideas and suggestions clearly in mind only so that you can be helpful in the discussions you are going to have.

2. Invite from three to ten people to meet in a home. Keep the meeting completely informal. (p. 36, paragraph no. 2). To this first meeting invite only those who you think will be sympathetic to the idea of having a committee. Open the discussion by talking about your own church—the absence of a regular and adequate way to deal with social issues, the limitations of the sermon and speeches at this point (pp. 24-30). The question you have for the group is, "What can we do about this in our church?"

If you are the minister you might decide to lay some special groundwork for this meeting on the preceding Sunday by preaching a sermon on "Lest We Forget," or some variation of that theme. (p. 3.).

Don't say too much in your introduc-

### In This Issue

Those Congregational Christians who read *SOCIAL ACTION* magazine found much stimulation in the February issue which dealt with "Ways of Christian Social Action." The Commission on Christian Social Action thinks so well of this issue that a copy is being sent with this issue of *CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY* to every Evangelical and Reformed pastor and social action committee of record.

In the accompanying article, the Reverend Herman F. Reissig, International Relations Secretary of the Council for Social Action, at our request suggests how the issue in question can be used to assist a local congregation in organizing for social action. Page references are to "Ways of Christian Social Action," *SOCIAL ACTION* magazine, February, 1954.

Our other contributors are Galen R. Weaver, Race Relations Secretary of the Council, and Frank S. Ketcham, chairman of CSA's Committee on Christian Citizenship.

tory remarks. Let the questions begin: Based on your own thinking and experience and on your reading of "Ways of Christian Social Action," you will have some, at least, tentative answers to the questions. Steer a middle course between presenting positive, detailed opinions and, on the other hand, giving no guidance at all. If, after talking around the subject for an hour, the group agrees there ought to be some kind of committee, let there be a decision to have a second and larger meeting the following month. Get from those present the names of others to be invited.

3. Order from the C.S.A. or the C.C.S.A. copies of the following materials: "Ways of Christian Social Action" (25c, 10 or more, 20c); copies of a recent issue of *Christian Community*,

(3c); "Social Action Comes to First Church" (25c a single copy, nine copies \$1.75); and other materials your denominational agency may suggest as helpful to your purpose. Get enough copies to give to those who were present at the first meeting, with enough left for those who come to the second meeting. When the materials arrive, hand or mail them at once to those who were present at the first meeting, with the suggestion that they look them over before the second meeting.

**Note:** If you have no money to pay for these materials and will write that you want them definitely for the purpose of getting a committee started, the C.S.A. or the C.C.S.A. will be glad to send samples free of charge.

4. To the second meeting invite those present at the first meeting plus representative leaders and officers of the church: a deacon, a trustee, an officer of each church organization. Keep in mind that social action is the business of all Christians and of the whole church. ("The Social Action Committee," p. 30). If you have members who think the church should have nothing to do with social issues, use your judgment about inviting them. They can have their say later on. When you want to get something started you usually begin by enlisting the support of persons who have some sympathy for the idea.

Begin by saying that a group met informally to talk about "something important to the church and that the opinions of a wide group" were desired. Go over the ideas agreed upon at the first meeting. Questions raised by the additional people brought in can now be answered, not just by the person setting up the meetings (it might be well to let two or three people from the first meeting take responsibility for arranging the second one) but by all those who have been reading the materials sent to them.

Some of those present will ask the fundamental question, "What is social action?" The definition on page 19 and

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# CHURCH AND RACE

President Eisenhower made no reference to civil rights in his State of the Union Message. This was according to expectations. However the present administration has intervened in the segregation issue as it has been before the courts. This was done in cases involving public eating places in the District of Columbia. The Attorney General also appeared in the public education cases. The Justice Department was instructed by the President to submit briefs setting forth the illegality of segregation and upholding the power of the courts to declare it so. These moves demanded considerable courage.

An excellent bill (S. 692) has been introduced by Senator Ives. Its purpose is "to prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry." It is entitled the "Federal Equality of Opportunity in Employment Act." Its provisions would apply to any employer of 50 or more workers, to labor organizations with 50 or more members, and to employment agencies. Non-profit and religious organizations are exempted. The commercial operations engaged in by employers who are covered must move in inter-state trade except in the case of the District of Columbia and the Territories of Alaska and Hawaii.

The investigating, negotiating and enforcement agency would be a Commission of seven members appointed by the President subject to the consent of the Senate. The normal terms of office would be seven years and the annual salary \$15,000. Authority is given to issue cease and desist orders when unlawful practices have been verified. Judicial review is provided for.

The nine sponsors of the bill include both Republicans and Democrats. Its authors drew upon the experience of eleven states and a score or more of municipalities that have similar laws.

Social action committees and individuals should write for a copy of the bill (S. 692) and indicate to their Senators and Representatives their position on it. The bill has no real chance of passing in this session but support by citizens will at least help to keep the idea alive until such time as a Congress more favorable to civil rights advances is elected.

Senate bill 2672 has been introduced and referred to Committees. It has special interest for our readers because the background factual material was

assembled by a research, conducted by the Race Relations Department of the American Missionary Association, into discrimination against Negro passengers on coaches traveling between Northern and Southern cities. This bill would penalize transportation facilities operating in inter-state commerce that impose, in services offered to passengers, segregation based on race, creed or color. For more than a year our Department of Race Relations has been working with Senator Humphrey and later with Senator Ives in relation to such legislation.

House Concurrent Resolution 108 has aroused widespread opposition on the part of Indian Americans all over the nation. It would withdraw all federal protections and services from the Indians of California, Florida, New York and Texas and also from five specifically named additional tribes, without attempting to obtain the consent of the groups of Indians directly affected. Some close students of the problem fear that this proposed law would be disastrous for many of the Indians to whom it would be applied. Moreover it is likely, unless defeated in this session, to become an unfortunate model for dealing with other tribes as well.

## News from South Africa

A new story from the Union of South Africa published in the *New York Times* of January 17 states that the white citizens of that land are bored with talk about the relations between the white minority and the native black majority. The minority that is in control desires to keep the status quo. However, it appears also to be true that some white Christians are disturbed by the injustices and perils involved in the status quo. A correspondent of the *Christian Century* in South Africa reported (December 9, 1953 issue) a conference which he called "by far the most important religious event to occur in South Africa in many months." It was held in Pretoria in November. This conference was called by the Federal Missionary Council of the Dutch Reformed Church. More than 150 delegates and observers were present. They represented 29 churches and missionary societies, including Anglican, Methodist and Congregationalist. They came together to consider the "application of Christian principles in our multi-racial land." No non-whites ('non-Europeans') were invited to this first conference but it was decided that

they will be asked to participate in a second and larger conference to be held next year.

Anglican, Methodist and other church representatives voiced once again their opposition to 'apartheid' or racial segregation as advocated and enforced by the Malan government. The really encouraging feature was the outspoken opposition of a Dutch Reformed theological professor, B. B. Keet. He declared that, if it is true that the State has followed the lead given by the (Dutch Reformed) Church in formulating its apartheid policy, it is now time for the church, in accordance with the principles of the Gospel, to lead the state in the direction of unity. He is quoted as saying: "Is it really a conflict of color or must we see it as a conflict of values in which the opposing groups are not whites and non-whites, but Christian civilization against barbarism—a conflict in which white and non-white stand side by side . . . I refuse to believe that it is beyond the range of possibility for our statesmen to devise ways and means whereby their inalienable rights can be secured for all without endangering the preservation of our spiritual heritage." . . . "The fact that Christian theologians on all sides are agreed that apartheid is not the model for a Christian community should be enough for us."

The assistant editor of the Dutch Reformed Church magazine supported the view of Professor Keet.

## UN Concern

A lengthy report of an official Commission has been submitted to the United Nations. It describes the patterns of relationship between the races in South Africa. The Commission was denied the opportunity for first hand study on the spot but nevertheless assembled a great amount of pertinent information that documents the extremely unfortunate situation there. At the second Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be held in Evanston, U. S. A., this year, race relations in South Africa, the United States and various other parts of the world will be pointed up as a critically important Christian problem. An extensive research study has been made available as the basis for the discussions and recommendations.

Galen R. Weaver



## Dates to Remember

The following dates represent opportunities for acquiring information and skill in dealing with important areas of Christian concern.

**May 31 to June 4.** Workshop on the City Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Conducted by Commission on Christian Social Action and Board of National Missions (E&R). For pastors in synods west of Indiana-Illinois line.

**June 25 to 27.** Conference on Christian and His Daily Work, Tiffin, Ohio. Sponsored by Commission on Christian Social Action and Churchmen's Brotherhood (E&R). For laymen selected on regionally and vocationally representative basis.

**July 5 to 29.** Yale School of Alcohol Studies, New Haven, Conn. For information write CSA (CC) or CCSA (E&R).

**July 12 to 17.** Interdenominational Institute on Racial and Cultural Relations. Los Angeles, California. For information write Galen Weaver (CC) or Huber Klemme (E&R).

**July 19 to 24.** Interdenominational Institute on Racial and Cultural Relations, Lincoln University, Oxford, Pa. (Same as above.)

**August 2 to 7.** Interdenominational Institute on Racial and Cultural Relations, Eden Theological Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri. (Same as above.)

**October 11 to 13.** United-Nations—World Order Seminar, New York. Conducted by Council for Social Action and Commission on Christian Social Action. Write Herman Reissig (CC) or Huber Klemme (E&R).

## Churchmen in Washington

Approximately 30 Congregationalists and 15 Evangelical and Reformed ministers, laymen, and women were among the 275 participants in the 1954 Churchmen's Washington Seminar, conducted February 23 to 26 by the National Council of Churches Washington office and cooperating denominations. Addresses by church leaders, journalists, Congressmen and officials in government departments were supplemented by workshops, group conferences, and attendance at committee hearings.

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings of the denominational delegations, a joint E&R-CC breakfast was held to promote fellowship and to discuss common social action program interests in general and *Christian Community* in particular.



## Washington Report

### The President's Social Policy Messages

The President has now submitted to Congress his three major messages on *social security*, the nation's *health*, and the ever-needed *housing program*. While making valuable suggestions, the programs, except in the field of social security, are far from comprehensive. Proposals in latter field indicate extent to which old age insurance and related benefits have become part of national fabric. However, Report of President's Economic Advisers makes clear reason for apparent hesitancy all along social policy lines: not to burden business in recession—use enlarged social policy primarily as business stimulator.

Contrary to earlier doubts President endorses social security as "cornerstone of Government's programs to promote economic security of individual." Saving grace: it is "contributory system" with benefits at least partly related to the individual's earnings. Requested expansion of coverage to farmers, farm and domestic workers, self-employed professionals, and to state and local employees and clergymen on voluntary group basis is not startling. Increase on limit of permitted earnings to \$1,000 on annual basis instead of \$75 per month is good. Increases of benefits are needed and those of tax base justified to keep system liquid. Though expanded old age coverage may cut public assistance need in that area, aid to the blind, dependent children and disabled should be expanded, utilizing moneys saved elsewhere. Savings in old age benefits should lead to better services in other fields, where need remains great.

Administration's health program emphasizes investment in new physical facilities for rehabilitation, diagnosis and ambulant treatment, nursing and care for chronically ill. *Wolverton bills* provide: (a) H.R. 7341 for assistance to states through a fund of \$60,000,000 for each of next three years of treatment centers, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals for chronically ill and nursing homes; (b) H.R. 7397 for grants-in-aid to states for extended public health special health projects as now carried out by Children's Bureau from Social Security Reserve funds; (c) H.R. 7700 for construction of medical facilities for medical group practice and health serv-

ice associations through mortgage financing for which a Medical Facilities Mortgage Insurance Fund under the Surgeon General authorized to issue mortgages up to \$1,250,000,000 at any time is created. However, message does not attack problem of how to increase medical and auxiliary personnel to man facilities proposed to be created.

Though President's message (H.R. Doc. 298) details burden of medical expenses on citizenry and need for meeting it by comprehensive insurance, Administration has not come to grips with problem. Message and legislation lack concrete proposals for broader medical expense prepayment plans at moderate cost and group medical care. Even re-insurance of catastrophic medical expenses proposed by President has not yet been translated into legislative proposals.

The President's housing program similarly combines progressive steps for better housing with emphasis on opportunities for private financial gain. Secondary mortgage market proposal may indeed leave government with all bad risks while private lenders take good ones. President's financing suggestions have already run into heavy opposition on ground of increased government expenditures. On the other hand, proposal to resume low-cost housing is step in right direction, though 140,000 units in four years is far below goals staked in 1949 Act. Administration bills will probably be introduced before this appears.

Attention should be paid to new approaches in housing bill by Representative Bolling (H.R. 7469). It introduces middle-income cooperative housing program, tried with some success in New York, setting up organization for mortgage loans and planning funds. It services, improved health services and also provides direct loans for home-builders who cannot get private credit, up to \$10,000 and 30 years, thus helping minority groups subject to discrimination. Bolling's bill also resumes housing research, creates builder's warranty to protect against shoddy builders and authorizes resumption of low-cost public housing projects. *Frank S. Ketcham*



## Christian Community

A Program Service of the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Sent free to interested pastors and social action committees. Additional copies may be obtained for 3 cents each.

Requests from Congregational Christians should be addressed to Council for Social Action, Ray Gibbons, Director, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

Requests by Evangelical and Reformed and general communications should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio.

## How You Can Organize Your Church For Social Action

(Continued from Page 1, Col. 3)

the material on the preceding pages (5-19) will help provide an answer. It may help to distinguish between social action and social service (page 18). Others will raise questions about the C.S.A. or the C.C.S.A. (See "Help from the National Agency," p. 37). For questions about the C.S.A. you should have the booklet, *The Stewardship of the Council for Social Action*. From C.C.S.A., you can secure *Our Social Witness*. But do not let the discussion be concentrated on the national agency! The question is, "What can our church do?"

Someone may object to the words "social action." ("The Name Frightens People," p. 31). If another objects that he can apply his religion to social issues without help from the church, what would be your answer? (See "Individual Ends and Social Means," pp. 12-16).

If there is a generally favorable response the next question would be, "Where do we go from here?" (See the cases cited, pp. 35-37) Try to get agreement on a plan that fits your church. Is the committee to be appointed by the church board or elected at the next annual congregational meeting? Then make definite plans for the presentation

of the proposal. Is a provision for a committee to be added to the constitution? See the "Suggested By-Law for a Local Church Social Action Committee" on the inside of the back cover.

At this meeting choose a small committee to work with the minister in making plans. The minister should be consulted and give counsel all along the line but, from the start, put the main responsibility on lay members. ("The Minister's Role," p. 33).

5. At some point in the process of getting started you may wish to invite a staff member of the national agency to visit your church. If the staff member is invited to preach on Sunday morning and to meet with your interested people in the afternoon or evening, he will have a chance to interpret the Christian basis of social action, give information on what other churches and denominations are doing, and make practical suggestions for your consideration. Where the State Conference or Synod, has an active social action committee or a staff member assigned to social action you may get valuable help from this source.

6. The minister and the small temporary committee suggested above will give very careful thought to the question of who should be on the committee (p. 30) and especially who should be chairman (page 31). The success of the effort will depend largely on the good sense, Christian devotion, and ability of the chairman.

7. Make at least a small amount of money available to the committee. It cannot function without buying some printed material. It will wish, occasionally, to circularize the church membership.

8. Let the minister install or induct the committee members into their new office, charging them with responsibility for helping the members of the church to understand and carry out their responsibilities as citizens.

The committee should take its time in educating itself on its functions. Every member should be put on the mailing list (free) of *Christian Community*. Every member should be a subscriber to *Social Action*. Every mem-

ber should read "Ways of Christian Social Action." Let the first two or three meetings (they should occur monthly) be given to a discussion of the general purposes and functions.

10. How does the committee take hold of its responsibility? (See p. 28, third paragraph, to p. 30.) Many stories of what local committees have done are published in *Christian Community*. Questions addressed to the national denominational agency will receive personal attention.

11. If, after thorough discussion at the meetings described in steps 2 and 4, it seems clear that the church is not ready for official action, put the whole matter aside for a little while. Meanwhile, however, let the goal be kept in mind. In sermons, in conversations, through the distribution of reading materials, the minds of members can be changed. Meanwhile, also, an unofficial group within the church may give leadership. (See "Substitutes for the Official Committee," pp. 33-35). In every church *something* can be done now. In every church, under wise and resolute leadership, a strong, official, helpful social action committee can some day be welcomed as a necessary part of the church's response to the call of Christ.

## New Handbook Ready

The Commission on Christian Social Action announces the publication of a new release in its series of *Christian Social Action Handbooks*. It is entitled *OUR SOCIAL WITNESS* and contains the social action resolutions of the 1953 General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, together with important background information drawn from the Commission's report to the General Synod. Suggestions for further study and action in the fields considered by the General Synod are appended. Copies may be secured at 20 cents each.

An earlier handbook, *THE SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION*, containing suggestions supplementing those indicated in the accompanying article, is still available at 10 cents per copy.